

First Call for Dioscuri Centres of Scientific Excellence in the Czech Republic

Preamble

The Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (MPG) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) open the first call for Dioscuri Centres of Scientific Excellence in the Czech Republic.

The joint calls by MPG and MEYS are designed to establish Centres of Scientific Excellence at Czech Host Institutions. Going beyond the scope of a project grant, a Dioscuri Centre (DC) is built around a distinguished researcher position. It is awarded to excellent scientists capable of establishing and leading an outstanding, highly visible research group. A DC shall connect the local research landscape to the wider scientific community while simultaneously positioning the leader of the DC in the respective field. These efforts will be supported by Partners from German universities or research institutions. Partners will promote the Centres' structural development and integration in scientific networks, thereby strengthening scientific exchange between the Czech Republic and Germany. The DC's development will further be supported by an international Scientific Advisory Board.

DCs are expected to conduct top-class internationally competitive and innovative research. Each of them will be funded with up to € 300,000 p.a., initially for five years. This amount will be part of a larger package involving supplementary funds, infrastructure, scientific equipment, and a long-term perspective for the leader of the DC at the respective Host Institution (to be arranged individually between selected candidates and their Host Institutions). This will put the DC in a position to attract additional funding from Czech and European/international sources.

Applicants are asked to provide a concept for the DC they plan to establish, which includes an innovative research program as well as an outline for the DC's structural development.

In the first call, up to a total of three DCs will be established in the fields of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Life Sciences and Natural Sciences and Technology.

Each DC established through this call will be monitored and evaluated by the Dioscuri Scientific Committee, and will be awarded the title of

Dioscuri Centre of Scientific Excellence.

A programme initiated by the Max Planck Society, jointly managed with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) in the Czech Republic, and mutually funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the MEYS.

Dioscuri is a program devised by MPG to support the development of lighthouses of scientific excellence in Central and Eastern Europe by promoting outstanding scientists who want to conduct their research in this region. Following a bottom-up and sustainable approach, it strives to establish future-oriented research fields and international standards of scientific quality. Dioscuri serves to strengthen the European Research Area as a whole and to expand the foundations for long-term economic and social prosperity in Europe.

1. The call is directed at internationally competitive and scientifically outstanding **scientists** from **all scientific disciplines**, who have proven their ability to conduct innovative research independently and:

- a. who completed their PhD no longer than 15 years prior to the application deadline¹.
- b. who have proven their international mobility over the course of their scientific career, e.g., pursued their PhD and post-doc at different research institutions (at least one of them outside the Czech Republic), have established a network of international collaborators and have a strong record of publications in international scientific journals with a reach outside the Czech Republic.
- c. who have not carried out their main research activity at the host institution for more than twelve months in the three years immediately before the application deadline.

2. Only Czech research organizations, which are legally defined as research organizations are eligible² as **Host Institutions**. The Host Institution must declare to:

- a. sign a contract of full-time employment with the leader of the DC for the entire funding period;
- b. sign contracts with DC personnel: the form of employment is to be agreed upon by all parties (contract of employment, contract of specific task, contract of mandate);
- c. provide from its own budget additional funding for the DC in the amount of at least € 25,000 on average per year for the entire funding period (the amount of additional annual funding may be raised for the entire funding period or a higher amount of additional funding may be offered for specific years and/or purposes);
- d. provide the DC with optimal conditions for carrying out its research, including office/ laboratory space and research equipment necessary for the completion of the research;
- e. provide administrative and financial services and support to the DC;
- f. provide at its own expense a full-time English-speaking administrative coordinator exclusively for the DC for the entire funding period;
- g. provide support related to the DC leader's relocation and stay in the Czech Republic. This may include childcare and/or dual career services to support the partner of the DC leader in finding a suitable position (if applicable);
- h. assign a group leader at the HI as institutional guide to support the DC leader in questions concerning local regulations and practices during the first year of the DC;
- i. offer a long-term perspective to the leader of the DC beyond the DioscURI funding period. This includes a commitment to create a permanent position at the end of the funding period for which the DC leader will be eligible to apply.

¹ Female applicants can add 18 months for each child, male applicants can add the number of months spent on parental leave (if applicable).

² A list of eligible host institution may be found here: <https://www.msmt.cz/modules/marwel/index.php?rewrite=vyzkum-a-vyvoj-2%2Fvyzkumne-organizace&str=2> Definition of research organization: Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014, Article 2, point 83; List of research organizations: Act No. 130/2002 Coll. §33a (Czech Republic law); The method of reporting income from knowledge transfer: Government Regulation No. 160/2017 Coll. (Czech Republic law).

3. The work of the Dioscuri Centre shall be accompanied by a senior **Partner from Germany**.
 - a. The Partner must be employed by a German university or research institution.
 - b. The Partner shall be well-positioned in the respective research field and suited to advise on the scientific and structural development of the DC.
 - c. Joint activities with the Partner might take different forms and are eligible for funding through Dioscuri.

4. Rules for **financing** a Dioscuri Centre of Scientific Excellence include:
 - a. The funding period for each DC comprises five years beginning from the date of the establishment of the respective DC.
 - b. The budget of each DC transferred to the respective Host Institution will be up to € 300,000 per year. A minimum of € 25,000 per year is added to the budget of the DC from the Host Institution's own funds.
 - c. Upon positive evaluation of a DC during its fourth year and subject to the availability of funding, funding for the respective DC may be extended for another five years.
 - d. Eligible costs from the DC budget (including the additional budget provided by the Host Institution as specified in 2c):
 - i. Salary of the leader of the DC: up to € 100,000 per year
 - ii. Salaries of the members of the DC research team
 - iii. Costs related to the research conducted at the DC (consumables, travel, publications, outreach activities etc.)
 - iv. Costs of joint activities with the Partner from Germany
 - e. The DC budget (including the additional budget provided by the Host Institution as specified in 2c) cannot be used for expenses relating to:
 - i. Infrastructure
 - ii. Scientific equipment³
 - iii. Administration and overheads⁴

Such costs (5.e. i-iii) must be provided for fully by the Host Institution.
 - f. Relocation costs for the leader of the DC (in case she/he needs to move to the city where the DC is established) shall be covered in a single lump-sum payment derived from the first annual contribution of the HI. The amount of the lump-sum payment is dependent on the current residency of the DC leader and the number of family members accompanying her/him to the Czech Republic⁵.

³ Research equipment understood as sets of testing, measurement and laboratory apparatuses of limited application and high technical parameters (usually several orders of magnitude higher than typical apparatus used for production or utilisation purposes), which constitutes the tangible assets of the host institution, according to the accounting policies adopted by it. Small devices that cost up to € 3,100 (80,000 CZK) per item may be paid from the DC budget (up to a total of € 10,000 p.a.). In accordance with Czech Tax Law (Act number 609/2020 Coll., paragraph 26), which sets the financial limit of a „small tangible asset” at 80,000 CZK. Any scientific equipment that costs more than 80,000 CZK falls under 5e.ii. and may not be paid from the Dioscuri grant.

⁴ Salaries of the administrative and financial staff (performing services related to personnel, accounting, legal issues, including the outsourcing of accounting to an accountancy office), costs of renovation of facilities, costs of adapting/upgrading facilities, so that they can meet the needs of the research tasks, fees and rent for the use of facilities, property taxes, etc., utilities (cost of electricity, heating, heating gas, water, as well as other transmission fees, sewage, etc.), costs of cleaning, janitorial and security services to facilities, cost of non-life insurance, handling and administrative fees, cost of banking services, including opening a separate account for the grant, bank fees, costs of external audits.

⁵ Relocation costs will be covered as a lump sum payment in the amount of:

- g. The leader of the DC will be eligible and encouraged to apply for additional funding from Czech and European/international sources.
5. The **application** must be submitted via our online platform **until 25 July 2022**.
- a. Applications are made up of an application form, a short research concept and a full research concept and are subject to a formal eligibility check and peer review.
 - b. The eligibility check is carried out by MPG and MEYS.
 - c. Applications must be submitted online via: <https://dioscuri.cloud.opencampus.net>
6. The Dioscuri Committee is responsible for the overall **evaluation and selection process**.
- a. The review of all eligible applications is based solely on the scientific merit of the applicants and the quality of their research concepts.
 - b. In a first stage, the Committee reviews all eligible applications and selects up to around 15 applications based on short research concepts.
 - c. In the second stage, the remaining applications are subject to external peer review based on full research concepts. The Dioscuri Committee subsequently selects up to around 6 applicants for final interviews.
 - d. In the third stage, applicants selected in the previous stage are invited for final interviews. The Dioscuri Committee selects up to 3 applicants for funding.

i. Leader of the DC currently living in the Czech Republic: € 2,000 (spouse or civil partner: + € 500; per child + € 250); ii. Leader of the DC currently living in other European Countries* : € 4,000 (spouse or civil partner: + € 1,000; per child + € 500); iii Leader of the DC currently living in non-European Countries: € 8,000 (spouse or civil partner: + € 2,000; per child + € 1,000). *European countries include: EU member states, Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Holy See, Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Monaco, Montenegro, Moldova, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the UK.